



## Boat Ramp Opens Northernmost Everglades to Public



Pay no mind to that hulking gator floating on the water's surface offshore from the new boat ramp at the northern end of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

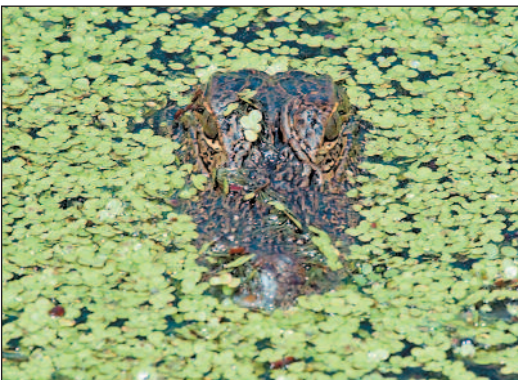
While the leathery 8-footer is certainly no "Freddy," the affable animated alligator mascot of the South Florida Water Management District, maybe this cold-blooded Jurassic throwback will become the unofficial greeter to the northernmost boat access to the Everglades. The District ramp is expected to generate a lot of traffic from anglers, sight-seers, birders and other outdoor lovers when it opens in September. The facility includes an adjacent fishing dock, a covered kiosk and environmentally friendly, composting restrooms. There is a paved parking lot and the ramp can accommodate two boats at once.

The facility is an improved replacement to the previous District boat ramp that served this end of the Refuge, which also encompasses the District's Water Conservation Area 1 (WCA 1). The old facility, which closed in 1997 to make way for Everglades restoration construction, attracted a "conservative estimate" of 200 boaters a week, said Serena Rinker, an interpretive specialist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which oversees the Refuge.

"We put an announcement in our newsletter and right off the bat we got half a dozen calls," Rinker said. "They all want to know when it's going to open."

Public boat ramps on District property are nothing new. There are more than 160 ramps open to the public throughout the 16-county District, from the Everglades in the south to Lake Tohopekaliga in the north. But this is the first "major new ramp we've done in many years," said

Fred Davis, the District's land stewardship director. Its construction is being handled by the District, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service will operate it.



"After the old boat ramp was lost, people had to drive all the way to (the refuge's main entrance) west of Boynton Beach," Davis said. "This will reconnect people in western Palm Beach County to the refuge. It's certainly the northernmost boat access to the Everglades system."

Entrance to the facility will be monitored by a gate near 20-mile Bend off of Southern Boulevard. Admission will cost \$5 per vehicle and it will be open from sunrise to sunset. A law enforcement official will be on patrol or on call at all times. And be sure to look for the gator.

"Oh, yeah – this is his home," a construction worker at the boat ramp said one recent afternoon.

A dedication event is planned in September to officially open the new ramp. For directions or additional information, visit [loxahatchee.fws.gov](http://loxahatchee.fws.gov) or call (561) 734-8303.

## CREDITS

*WaterMatters* is produced by the South Florida Water Management District's Department of Public Information to inform the public about District projects and programs. An internet version is also available in English and Spanish at [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov)

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*The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.*

*Our mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply.*

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Year 2, Issue 6

## And the Survey Says... You spoke. We listened.



Our request for reader feedback prompted a great response and we appreciate the input. If you think the paper feels a little different this issue, you're right! Read on to discover why.

- Of the 1,100 responses received, a whopping 98 percent read all or some of the articles
- An overwhelming majority prefer a printed copy to an electronic version
- More than half agree with the distribution schedule of every other month
- Not surprisingly, interest areas were quite varied. The top six are:
  - Environmental restoration
  - Plants and animals
  - Water conservation/landscaping
  - Recreation on public lands
  - Science and technology
  - Water availability

While we received a lot of compliments on the newsletter design and photography, we also heard from several readers about the choice of paper.

Here's what we're doing with the data. First, we're going to continue to provide you with a variety of informational and educational articles. Secondly, we've reduced the weight of the paper. This change allows us to maintain our high quality standards, while lowering our production and distribution costs.

And finally, to keep the newsletter "fresh" and lively, we've made a few changes on our own. We've tweaked the *WaterMatters* masthead to make each issue more distinctly recognizable and we plan to take you on "a day at the District" so you can get your feet wet with staff. And if you're young or new to South Florida, we've added a bit of water management history by sharing some photos from yesteryear. Thanks for letting us know what matters to you!

*Question selected from District letters and emails received from the public.*

**Q** Is there public, recreational boating access to the stormwater treatment areas (STA 1-West, STA 2, STA 3/4, STA 5 and STA 6)?

**A** Consistent with the new policy on public recreational use on South Florida Water Management District lands, we are evaluating the potential for expanding the stormwater treatment areas (STAs). These large constructed wetlands are part of a state and federally mandated water quality improvement program, so their first and foremost intended use is phosphorus reduction, and that intended use cannot be compromised. However, there are many public uses that appear to be consistent with water quality treatment, and we are investigating which uses can be made available in which STAs. Uses being considered include bird watching, fishing from external levees, limited water fowl hunting in selected areas, hiking, bicycling and possibly horseback riding. However, boating within an STA is not considered a compatible use because of the impact that vessels have in creating paths through the treatment vegetation. These paths lead to inefficient phosphorus removal due to what is referred to as hydraulic short-circuiting, where the water preferentially moves through the paths and is not treated by the vegetation.

Please review our Public Use Guide, which outlines a variety of areas throughout the region where access and recreation of all types is available. Get your copy at [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov) or call (561) 682-6635.

## ANSWER TO FIND FREDDY

### S-5A Pump Station

*Freddy is monitoring things like water, oil, and cylinder temperatures of engines at the S-5A Pump Station in central Palm Beach County. Pump stations help manage water resources, especially now during southern Florida's wet season when we may have excess water from cloudbursts or rain brought by tropical storms or hurricanes.*

*The pump station is equipped with six propeller pumps driven by diesel engines that move water from the drainage area served by the West Palm Beach Canal into Water Conservation Area 1, where it can be stored for future use. Each engine is capable of pumping 800 cubic feet of water per second (cfs) or 2,160,000 gallons per minute (gpm).*

*Pump stations serve a purpose during dry weather as well. When water demands are high and supply is low, water is released from storage areas to meet the needs of people and the environment alike.*



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